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ABSTRACT

The study focused on the attitudes of college students (preservice and inservice teachers) toward sex roles. The survey instrument, a 32-item questionnaire, elicited responses from United States, Nigerian, and Egyptian students on their attitudes about how students should be treated and educated for their roles in society. The responses were compared in terms of male and female scores, highest and lowest mean scores for men and women, and mean scores between countries. The responses suggested that college students from all three countries reflect the social, political, and cultural turmoil of the times. Students from all three countries showed a positive attitude toward change-oriented statements, which led to speculation that as countries continued to develop, their university students tended toward a more egalitarian view as to the role of the sexes in society. United States students in this study tended to be more feminist in point of view and less traditional in their responses. (Author/TRS)

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AMERICAN, NIGERIAN AND EGYPTIAN STUDENT ATTITUDES ON SEX ROLES

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AMERICAN, NIGERIAN AND EGYPTIAN STUDENT ATTITUDES ON SEX ROLES

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on the attitudes of college students (pre-service and in-service teachers) on sex roles. The survey instrument elicited responses from American, Nigerian and Egyptian students on their attitudes toward how students should be treated and educated for their role in society. These responses were compared in terms of male and female scores, highest and lowest mean scores for men and for women, and the mean scores between countries. The responses suggest that college students from all three countries reflect the social and cultural turmoil of their times. Students in all three countries showed a positive attitude toward "change-oriented statements." One might speculate from these responses that, as countries continue to develop, their university students tend toward a more egalitarian view as to the position of women in the society.

AMERICAN, NIGERIAN AND EGYPTIAN STUDENT ATTITUDES
ON SEX ROLES

The instrument used in this study on sex roles was originally administered by Professor Charles Berryman in his 1979 study. Berryman's study included responses from pre-service social studies students from different institutions including major public universities and regional colleges and universities thorughout the United States during the years 1977-78. The Nigerian study, using the same instrument and reported by the author in 1981, included Ahmadu Bello University, Institute of Education, Post-Graduate Diploma in English Sandwich Course, 1981, Vacation Programme students. The same instrument was used to survey Egyptian 1982 Fourth Year Faculty of Education students from Mansoura University. It should be noted that Berryman's sample was from 329 pre-service primary and secondary social studies students, 234 males and 158 females. The Nigerian sample was drawn from 50 students, 32 males and 18 females, who were graduates majoring in a variety of teaching areas, including social studies. The Egyptian sample was comprised of 34 males and 24 females for a total of 58 students who were preparing to teach English as a foreign language.

The exact same 32 item questionnaire was administered to the American, Nigerian, and Egyptian students. The students were asked to mark a Likert type scale with 0 standing for strongly agree to 4 standing for strongly disagree. Following is the questionnaire and the mean scores of the American, Nigerian, and Egyptian college and university students' responses.

American		Nigerian		Egyptian			
Male N =234		Male N =32		Male N =34			
Female N =158		Female N =18		Female N =24			
Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female		TRADITIONAL STATEMENTS
3.18	3.48	2.50	2.22	2.22	2.16	1.	Boys should be discouraged from choosing nursing as a profession.
2.09	2.67	1.28	.94	.37	.54	2.	Teachers should promote feminine behavior in girls and masculine behavior in in boys.
3.19	3.52	2.06	2.61	2.05	2.41	3.	The main reason women should train for a profession is so they can work if anything happens to their husbands.
3.01	3.54	2.10	2.55	1.80	2.56	4.	Engineering and mathematics are essentially masculine fields.
2.92	3.41	2.06	2.55	2.02	1.21	5.	Assertiveness is primarily a masculine trait.
2.24	2.51	1.12	.94	1.06	1.13	6.	I liked it better when you could tell a girl from a boy by haircut and clothing.
3.15	3.36	1.87	2.87	1.54	1.50	7.	Boys should be discouraged from crying.
3.24	3.45	2.50	2.43	1.31	.60	8.	Sensitivity is primarily a feminine trait.
2.94	3.25	2.66	2.00	1.14	.91	9.	Fighting is okay for boys, but not for girls.

3.32	3.76	2.83	3.11	1.00	2.65	10.	Boys should have better opportunities than girls to participate in extracurricular activities, since this is training for later leadership positions.
3.03	3.76	2.63	2.88	1.37	2.54	11.	Vocational counseling is more important for boys than girls since boys will be the major breadwinners.
2.84	3.31	2.06	1.72	2.02	2.55	12.	Whether textbooks show stereotyped behavior is unimportant, as long as the subject matter is accurately presented.
2.99	3.35	2.31	2.35	2.34	2.54	13.	A man teaching home economics is laughable.
3.32	3.77	3.21	3.33	2.25	3.62	14.	College education is less important for girls than for boys.
2.68	3.07	1.87	1.94	1.08	.58	15.	Classroom teachers in the elementary grades should try to change the behavior patterns of "effiminite" boys, regardless of the boy's wishes.
							CHANGE-ORIENTED STATEMENTS
2.47	2.94	2.18	1.72	1.22	1.50	16.	It's all right for girls to be "tomboys," but they should change their behavior when they become teenagers.

1.85	1.24	1.93	1.47	2.14	1.33	17.	Sex bias in textbooks is a serious problem.
1.89	1.32	1.93	1.09	1.65	.45	18.	More women should be principles and superintendents so that girls will have good role models.
1.59	.71	1.28	.94	1.68	.37	19.	Schools should allocate equal amounts of money for boys' sports and girls' sports.
1.53	1.10	1.75	1.33	2.[illegible]	1.86	20.	Eliminating sexual bias should be a major goal of the schools right now.
1.36	.74	2.06	1.77	3.14	2.04	21.	Women should have more leadership roles in education, business, and other professions.
1.71	1.10	2.00	1.76	3.20	3.00	22.	Girls should be taught how to be assertive.
3.05	2.65	3.06	2.29	2.60	2.70	23.	When job applicants for administrative positions are equally qualified, the employer should choose the woman rather than the man.
2.31	1.82	1.46	1.58	1.42	1.25	24.	Teachers should teach girls to compete with boys throughout school life.
1.79	1.23	1.78	1.05	2.60	2.69	25.	There should be more women athletes in spectator sports.
1.50	.72	2.12	1.70	2.28	1.79	26.	Textbooks should depict more girls and women in exciting leadership roles.

1.72	1.17	1.33	1.70	1.74	1.26	27.	All school activities should be coeducational, including sports, hygiene classes and shop classes.
1.54	1.25	1.66	1.12	2.00	.86	28.	Consciousness raising about sexism should be part of the school curriculum.
2.06	1.69	1.93	1.00	1.45	1.58	29.	"Chairperson" should be used in preference to "chairman."
							ADDITIOAL STATEMENTS
1.52	1.25	2.62	2.50	2.65	2.75	30.	There should be more male teachers in kindergarten and first grade.
1.88	1.12	2.09	2.65	2.40	2.50	31.	In general, boys should be taught to cook and sew and girls should be taught repair skills.
1.26	.77	.78	.68	1.25	.41	32.	Women teachers who show leadership ability should be encouraged to become school administrators.

Comparing the Mean Scores of the American, Nigerian, and Egyptian Responses

Berryman's early study revealed that American females took a feminist position on 2/3 of the responses, and 3/4 of the males agreed with them. As one might expect, because they come from a traditionally male dominated society, Nigerian and Egyptian females took a less feminist position than their American couterparts and were antifeminist on several of the items, such as (8) "Sensitivity is primarily a feminine

trait.", (9) "Fighting is okay for boys, but not for girls.", and (15) "Classroom teachers in elementary grades should try to change the behavior patterns of 'effeminite' boys, regardless of the boy's wishes."

According to Berryman, "Students in southern [American] institutions, colleges and universities took a more traditional male stance than those from one or more other regions within the United States" on items concerning haircuts and apparel and girls "behaving as girls" and "boys behaving as boys." Students in Nigeria agreed with this stance as did Egyptian students, especially males whose responses revealed a very strong male position reflected in their negative responses toward females taking a less submissive role than previously. In short, males preferred females who were not aggressive.

Comparing Lowest and Highest Mean Scores

If one were to select four items with the lowest mean score and four items with the highest mean score, some interesting observations can be made. On the lowest mean scores Nigerian females and males chose the same four items: (2) "Teachers should promote feminine behavior in girls and masculine behavior in boys.", (6) "I liked it better when you could tell a girl from a boy by haircut and clothing.", (19) "Schools should allocate equal amounts of money for boys' sports and girls' sports.", and (32) "Women teachers who show leadership ability should be encouraged to become school administrators.", suggesting an opposition to "unisex" apparel and behavior, but agreement with women receiving equal treatment. American females and males were together on only three items: (21) "Women should have more leadership roles in education, business, and other professions.", (26) "Textbooks should depict more girls and women in leadership roles.", and (32) "Women teachers who show

leadership ability should be encouraged to become school administrators.", all of which supported a women's liberation position. Egyptian females and males were together on only one item, agreeing that (2) "Teachers should promote feminine behavior in girls and masculine behavior in men." Identifying the four items with the highest mean scores, Nigerian males and females were together in negative responses, in short they showed displeasure with the same two items: (11) "Vocational counseling is more important for boys than girls, since boys will be the major breadwinners." and (14) "College education is less important for girls than for boys." American females and males together disagreed with items: (10) "Boys should have better opportunities than girls to participate in extra-curricular activities, since this is training for later leadership positions." and (14) "College education is less important for girls than boys." Thus, both Nigerians and Americans are inclined toward more equality between the sexes. However, Egyptian males and females were together on a different set of items, disagreeing with: (22) "Girls should be taught how to be agressive." and (30) "There should be more male teachers in kindergarten and first grade.", reflecting their predominately male oriented society.

Comparing American, Nigerian, and Egyptian women on the four items, high and low means scores, one would fine they chose three items to which they all responded the same, agreeing with: (19) "Schools should allocate equal amounts of money for boys' sports and girls' sports." and (32) "Women teachers who show leadership ability should be encouraged to become school administrators.", and disagreeing with (14) "College education is less important for girls than for boys." All the men matched in agreement on only one item (14), meaning they felt female higher education

was as important as boys.

Disregarding lowest and highes mean scores, it can be noted that females had the closest mean scores on items (14), (19), and (21) showing a strong feminist stance. Males were closest on only item (18) "More women should be principles and superintendents so that girls will have good role models.", which could be interpreted to mean that males take a much weaker feminine stance than do females.

Interpretation

The responses of males and females when considered together show that American responses tend generally to be more feminist in point of view than Nigerian or Egyptian responses. Americans took the feminist point of view on all items except (23) "When job applicants for administrative positions are equally qualified, the employer should choose the woman rather than the man.", demonstrating a desire for equality. Nigerians took a feminist point of view on all but five items. Egyptians were even less feminist and strongly in agreement with item (2) "Teachers should promote feminine behavior in girls and masculine behavior in boys.", (8) "Sensitivity is primarily a feminine trait.", and (15) "Classroom teachers in the elementary grades should try to change the behavior of 'effeminite' boys, regardless of the boy's wishes." In terms of family and social relations, Nigerians and Egyptians tend toward a male tradition, but in terms of work related items they tend toward a more feminist position. This is especially true for the females.

It is somewhat surprising, given the very large number of Muslim students who responded to the survey in northern Nigeria and Egypt, that their responses were not more consistent with their traditional culture.

One might have expected Americans, who are not as homogeneous in religion or cultural backgroundas are their counterparts in Africa, to be less traditional in their responses which proved to be true.

Because most American college and university students who took part in this study were in primary and secondary schools during the late 1960s and 1970s, a time of civil rights and emphasis upon equality of opportunity, it is not unexpected that they would have a positive attitude toward the femininst point of view. What is equally interesting and perhaps not totally unexpected is that Nigerian and Egyptian males and females surveyed in this study had, for the most part, a very positive attitude toward "change-oriented statements," which agreed favorably with their American counterparts. What this may suggest is that students from all three countries reflect the social and political turmoil of their times. It may be interesting to speculate that, if the Nigerians and Egyptians continue to have a positive attitude toward "change-oriented statements," they, as appears to be true of their counterparts in the United States, will eventually adopt stronger feminist attitudes toward items in the "traditional statements" category. Such a shift in attitude by Nigerian and Egyptian students might well signal a type of social and political alienation that was the experience of some young adults in the United States during the 1960's and early 1970s. Also the survey might signal that as developing nations' citizens become more urban, individualistic, and industrialized, they tend to develop attitudes that accept more equality between the sexes and less acceptance of traditionally stereotyped sex roles.

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